

Hurricane Season in Haiti

The hurricane season in Haiti extends from June 1 thru November 30. Although Haiti has generally been spared from the most severe hurricane destruction, prudence suggests that all American citizens, particularly those who have never experienced a hurricane or typhoon, should read this information to be aware of recommended procedures and precautions.

In the event a hurricane does strike, damage usually occurs from flying objects carried by high winds and torrential rains that produce sudden flooding and water blowing through louvers and windows and under doors. Full force winds up to 150 miles per hour are not uncommon for hurricanes. Rainfall floods constitute the hurricane's greatest threat.

PRECAUTIONARY SUPPLIES AND EQUIPMENT

During the hurricane season, it is recommended that every household have the following equipment on hand:

1) Radios

You should have a handheld radio system to keep in contact with your support network in Haiti. Make sure that the radio is operational and that the battery is fully charged.

2) Adequate Supply of Drinking Water

Keep a few extra containers of drinking water on hand in addition to that kept for normal day-to-day needs. You should have several days supply of drinking water.

3) First-Aid Kit

Keep on hand a complete kit for dealing with minor injuries.

4) Adequate Food Supply

Keep a supply of canned foods on hand. Your emergency food supply should also include some items which can be eaten uncooked or charcoal-broiled.

It is not recommended that you stockpile vast quantities of frozen foods. If municipal power is cut and generator backup fails due to hurricane conditions, frozen foods will thaw and spoil.

5) Adequate Supply of Bottled Cooking Gas

Always have a spare tank of gas; deliveries can be disrupted or stopped altogether on the days immediately following a hurricane.

6) Adequate Supply of Gasoline in Automobiles

It is suggested that during the hurricane season you keep your automobile gasoline tank at least half-full at all times.

7) Adequate Supply of Diesel Fuel for Residential Generators

Make sure your generator's fuel supply is regularly topped off, and especially in advance of a hurricane. Be prepared to reduce operating time during the day, should fuel run low. If you are concerned about your fuel level, contact GSO.

8) Water Containers

In the event of electric power failure, water pumps will not operate. It is a good idea to keep containers for storage of water, e.g., for use in flushing toilets; these containers and bathtubs should be filled during the warning period. Keep a bucket and a rope for drawing water from the cistern.

9) Flashlights (with spare batteries) and Candles

Municipal power lines may be blown down or shorted out, and electrical service may be interrupted for some time. If your generator should fail, flashlights and candles will be needed.

10) Duct Tape

Have enough rolls on hand to protect window panes (see below).

PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES DURING THE WARNING PERIOD

1) Secure All Outdoor Items

Bring inside everything that is loose and might be carried away by the wind; garbage cans and lids, garden hoses, sprinklers, garden furniture, flower pots, etc.

2) Protect Windows and Glass Doors

Protect windows, shutters, and glass doors with duct tape to minimize the possibility of flying glass. Use a "star" pattern for each window: one strip straight up (vertically) the

middle of the pane, one strip across the middle (horizontally) and one “X” from the corners. Wedge sliding glass doors to prevent their lifting from their tracks.

3) Move Furniture and Rugs Away from Doors and Windows

Keep in mind that parts of your home may be flooded; you should move valuable items well above floor level.

4) Remove Hanging Items from Walls

Remove pictures, paintings, mirrors, chandeliers, etc. from walls and store them in an area that will remain dry.

5) Gather Your Family Together

Gather your family together and give them calm and simple explanations about the hurricane and instructions about conduct during the actual storm. Identify safe areas of your residence where danger from broken windows or rising water will be minimal.

6) Bring in Pets

7) Move Car Away From Trees

Park your vehicles in a spot where falling branches and debris will not cause damage.

8) Turn up Refrigerator

Turn your refrigerator to maximum cold and don't open unless necessary.

DURING THE HURRICANE

1) Monitor radio and television announcements. Use phone only in emergency.

2) Close all windows, louvers, and doors on the windward side (the direction from which the wind is blowing) of the house. A window or door on the leeward side (away from the wind) of the house should be kept open. This will tend to equalize pressure inside the house with the pressure outside. It will also provide some ventilation. As the storm begins to pass, the wind will shift to the opposite direction; at this time, reverse the window and door closing pattern.

3) Remain indoors on the downwind side of the house away from windows. Beware of the eye of the hurricane. Should the “eye” or center of the hurricane pass in your vicinity, there will be a period of calm which may last from a few minutes to half an hour or more. The wind will return suddenly from the opposite direction, quite possibly with greater violence. Find an interior room away from outside walls and windows and stay in the room until the storm has passed.

4) When closing windows, always draw the curtain to help contain any glass should the window be broken by a flying object. Stay away from windows, and absolutely avoid the temptation to look out and see what is happening.

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS

1) Should you be in your office or workplace at the start of a hurricane, close all windows, doors, and shutters. Do not leave the building while the hurricane is in progress. Normally, if it is clear that Port-au-Prince will feel the effects of a hurricane during working hours, businesses will close early to allow employees to reach their homes safely and prepare for the storm.

2) If at home when a hurricane strikes, do not attempt to come to your office unless you have been assigned specific responsibilities having to do with the hurricane.

3) After the storm passes, avoid driving except in extreme emergency. There will continue to be danger from debris and downed electric wiring, as well as flooding in low-lying areas.

4) Avoid loose or dangling wires.

5) Prevent fires.

6) Check food that requires refrigeration. It may be spoiled if power has been off for some time.

Useful Links:

FEMA Readiness Website:

<http://www.ready.gov/america/beinformed/hurricanes.html>

FEMA Kids Site

<http://www.ready.gov/kids/home.html>